

RECKLESS RALPH'S

DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.

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PAWNEE BILL

Another Friend of Mine

by Gilbert Patten

"Burt L. Standish"

Writer of the Frank and Dick
Merriwell Stories

While still a very young boy I read one of Beadle's Half-dime Libraries about Pawnee Bill. It was written by Colonel Prentiss Ingraham, who, years later, became my comrade and "pard" in that Mecca of my heart's desire, Little Old New York. But in none of my boyhood dreams of long ago had I ever imagined I would meet and become friendly with Major Gordon W. Lillie, which was the real name of the daring young hero of Ingraham's yarn. However, to my great pleasure, such was my destiny after I also became a successful author of half-dime stories.

I was spending a season at my summer home in Camden, Maine, busily engaged at my vocation, when Pawnee Bill's Wild West Exhibition was billed to appear at Rockland, eight miles away. This was after Major Lillie and Bill Cody had dissolved partnership in the show business, each going his own way with his outfit of plainsmen, Indians, cowboys and dare devil rough riders. But although Pawnee Bill's show was on a much smaller scale than Cody's, it was a furiously fascinating spectacle, romantically portraying some features of frontier life. Naturally I did not muff a chance to behold it.

My work preventing me from attending the daylight performance, I was on hand, with my wife, to take in the after-dark show. Arriving at

the field where the canvas tents were pitched near a railroad crossing, I led my lady round through throngs of people streaming toward the entrance to the large show-tent, and found my way to the dressing tent at the rear. At an entrance to that tent I handed my visiting card to a guard, requesting him to take it to Major Lillie without delay. On the card I had written, "A friend of Col. Prentiss Ingraham."

Requesting me to wait there, the guard hurried away and returned soon with an invitation to follow him.

Within the dressing tent, which was connected with the show tent by a canvas-curtained passage, there was a confusion of men and beasts; cowboys, scouts, riders of many descriptions in picturesque paraphernalia, and fantastically painted almost-naked Indians, were preparing to mount restless, fiery horses at a word of command. In the midst of this seeming confusion, which actually was of a most orderly nature, I found myself face to face with a somewhat smallish but distinctly striking person, whose long hair fell upon the collar of a fringed buckskin jacket. Beside him stood a smiling comely lady, also young and of striking appearance, likewise attired for riding in distinctively Western style.

Pawnee Bill gripped my hand. "Delighted to meet you, Patten old son," he said, smiling. Any friend of Colonel Ingraham is my friend. This is my wife, Mae Lillie."

Hat in hand, I salanned, then introduced my wife.

"We are going in for the Grand Entrance right away," said Pawnee, and you and your lady must go with

us. Mrs. Patten will ride at my side and you'll ride at the side of Mrs. Lillie."

"But, Major," said I, feeling my face grow hot, "I've never ridden anything but my father's old horses bareback and Mrs. Patten doesn't ride at all. Thanks for the honor, but it just can't be done."

"Too bad," said he. "I'm sorry. And all the best seats are sold out. I'll have to seat you round at one side somewhat." Hurriedly he scribbled something on a card. "Take this round to the main entrance without delay and maybe you'll be seated before the exhibition begins. But we must see you after the show. Be sure to wait for the escort I'll send. Hurry now."

We hurried. The seats to which we were conducted were somewhat left of center but not at all bad. Barely were we settled there when a fanfare of trumpets sounded and through from the dressing tent a mass of wildly yelling horsemen came pouring like a torrent from a broken dam. On the crest of that torrent rode Pawnee Bill and his wife. The mass of horsemen spread out swiftly after entering, and then, still yelling like fiends, charged directly at the hypnotized and shrinking goggle-eyed spectators. Then, two thirds of the way across the performing ground, the charging mass halted abruptly and the yelling ceased. Halted, all of them except Pawnee Bill and Mrs. Lillie. Onward they came madly.

I didn't notice at first that that pair had swerved to come straight toward where my wife and I were sitting. Right up to the barrier they charged. There they reined their mounts to a rearing stand, the front legs of both horses pawing the air. A megaphoned voice rang out:

"Ladies and gen-teel-mun, Pawnee Bill and his be-yoo-ti-ful wife, in person!"

Pawnee Bill swept off his ten-gallon hat and bowed low, Mrs. Lillie laughing at his side. The relieved audience burst into applause.

I'll not attempt to describe the performance that followed. Suffice it to say that, on a smaller scale, it was much like Buffalo Bill's show, with the Deadwood stage and the Cossacks left out. But not even the Russian Cossacks in Cody's troupe were better riders or more daring showmen

than those daredevils in the employ of Gordon Lillie. And Major Lillie's smashing of glass balls by rifle shot while riding a galloping horse had never been bettered by the Hon. William F. Cody. Though she was an Eastern girl and a Smith College graduate, Mrs. Lillie also did some fancy shooting that was roundly applauded.

All through the performance the Major and his wife bore over from center to do their finest stunts directly in front of Gil Patten and his lady. This in time was not a little to the wonderment and distaste of the occupants of the higher-priced seats, none of whom, however, suspected the reason for it.

When the performance had ended with a grand flourish and we were passing out from the tent a man touched me on the shoulder and said "The Major wishes you to follow me."

It was some time before we won clear of the throng and reached the near-by railroad siding where Pawnee Bill's private car was standing. Major Lillie and his wife were there ahead of us, and we were taken into a cozily comfortable car, where I again expressed my regret that we had not been up to riding with them in the Grand Entrance.

The Major brought out bottled beer, nicely chilled, and crackers and cheese and we settled down to a jolly visit. There was also ice cream and cake for the ladies. We talked of Colonel Ingraham, Buffalo Bill, and border days, but all through it Pawnee Bill was as modest as a bashful school boy, shying away from any reference to his own exploits. Nevertheless, I did learn that he was a banker, as well as a ranch owner, in Pawnee, Oklahoma.

The hours flew and eventually the car we were in was bumped around a little. Suddenly I became aware that it was moving steadily and with increasing acceleration. My wife observed this at the same time.

"Hey!" she exclaimed. "We're going!"

"Just being switched around some," said Pawnee soothingly. "Take it easy Mrs. Gil."

But I detected a devilish twinkle in his eyes. "Switched around, hell!" I cried. "We're being kidnaped! Come on, woman!"

Jerking her to her feet, I ran her

toward the end of the car, our scheming host following and protesting. Reaching the platform, I swung that 110-pounder down the steps and off on to the ground so that she was able to keep her feet under her by running as the train was moving. Then I followed.

"Well, what do you think of that?" she gasped as I got hold of her and we stood staring after Major Lillie's departing car.

"Huh!" I grunted. "We came near being taken for a ride."

Then I saw the Major lean out to shout back at us: "Good night, Gil. Come again!"

"I will!" I shouted furiously, although I was laughing. "And when I do I'll take your scalp, you dastardly ruffian!"

Some years later, having obtained my second automobile a few days before, I drove from Camden to Boston with my wife to do some shopping. We arrived on a Saturday and she had barely time to purchase a new dress before dinner. We were stopping at a house on Huntington Avenue where we had previously quartered when in Beantown, and I learned through a newspaper that Pawnee Bill was showing in a huge old building at Revere Beach. So I suggested to my lady that this was my time to call on him and lift his scalp.

Driving past the old Parker House, I thought of something. "This car isn't insured," said I. "I'm going to stop here and wire my insurance agent in Camden to cover it immediately."

But she objected, saying that already we would be late for the evening performance. I argued, but she argued better—a habit she had—telling me it was silly to stop then. So reluctantly I kept on, feeling a nasty hunch that I was blundering.

At Revere Beach I bought seats in the balcony and we settled down to watch a show well under way. Presently Pawnee Bill galloped in to do his glass ball shooting act. Bowing to applause at the finish, he somehow caught sight of us and called gaily:

"Howdy, Gil, old sucker! Join us after we're through."

"That's what I'm here for, you bloody brute," I shouted back. "And when I leave, your scalp will dangle from my belt."

The audience applauded again. Maybe they thought it part of the show.

Once more we foregathered with the Major and his wife in their private car, there to enjoy crackers and cheese and beer, lingering into the wee sma' hours. And as the hours sped and the beer got in its work I became drowsy. Again and again I urged Mrs. Patten to take her leave with me, but she, having a fine time, objected to my unseemly haste. We were urged to stay all night, and now there was no fear of being kidnapped, as Pawnee's show was to continue there some time longer. Nevertheless, having received Mrs. Lillie's acceptance of my invitation to drive her around in my new auto on the morrow and show her Boston, which she had seen little of, I became adamant.

"Look here, wild woman," I said to my objecting frau, "we're going now. Later, I'll go to sleep and dump you beneath a blazing auto in a ditch. Here we go!"

Once more I dragged her out of that car. And I managed to keep my weary eyes open until I could drive into a wooden garage across the street from the house where we were billeted on Huntington Avenue. A night man asked if I wanted a wash, but as my car was grey and showed dust very little, I said no and requested that it be left convenient for use the next morning. A few minutes later I tumbled into bed and was asleep almost before my head hit a pillow.

Seemingly I'd scarcely flopped when I was aroused by a fearsome panting sound and the wailing shrieks of monsters swiftly approaching. Sitting up and prying my eyes open, I was dazzled by a red glare that came thru a large bow-window. Out of that bed I leaped like a jackrabbit in my night-shirt.

"Hey!" I howled. "That dam' garage is all afire!"

Yanking on my trousers and plunging my feet into slippers, I went down the front stairs in two jumps, my wife following as closely as she could. Out I shot into a gathering crowd of spectators, their faces tinged by the crimson glare of the flames. Across the street I galloped like an outlaw broncho of the plains. Right through the fire lines I tore, and into the wide-open door of the garage, beyond which was a leaping, roaring sea of fire. There a man grabbed me and brought me to a stop very rudely.

"Whatinell you think you're doing?"

he snarled. "Trying to commit suicide?"

"I've got a car in here!" I gulped.

"Now that's just too bad," said he sneeringly. "You'll find it with the others in the morning. Get out, crazy!"

"Did they—did they get any cars out?" I yammered.

"Yep, three, that's all," said he.

"What were they like?" I persisted.

"Two touring cars and a grey roadster. They're down the street a way on this side. Scramble, chump!"

"Thank you kindly," said I. "The grey roadster's mine."

I found them. They grey roadster was not mine. My wife found me rambling, dazed, toward the house where we bivouacked. When I had told her the sad news she remarked that they still might get our car out. I reminded her that she was frequently very silly, but made no direct reference to the fact that she had jawed me into not wiring for insurance.

"I'm going back to bed," said I.

"How can you sleep?" said she.

"How I can sleep!" said I.

I hit the bed again and went sound asleep with the engines still panting outside and that damned fire glaring in at the window. I slept like a dead man. Getting up in the morning, I looked out upon a strange spectacle. Three floors of that wooden garage had been consumed, the first, second and fourth. Supported by charred and blackened framework, the third floor miraculously hung suspended in the air. The fire, now extinguished but still oozing smoke from the ruins, had jumped the third floor.

I bathed, shaved, dressed, went out, crossed over and was allowed to peer down into the water-filled basement where lay hundreds of cars, it seemed, like scorched and drowned skeletons of rats. Finally I saw the twisted remains of a grey roadster.

"Good-bye, little old car," said I sadly. "You sure were a dandy while you lasted, but you lasted much too soon."

We had breakfast at a one-arm restaurant down the street and I bought a morning paper on the way back to the house. In the paper there was a brief account of the fire. I was reading this when the landlady appeared and said there was a man at the door asking for me. He proved to be a chauffeur with whom I vaguely remembered having spoken last night. I must have

given him my name and told him where I was stopping.

"Good morning, Mr. Patten," he said gloomily. "You're in luck."

"What do you mean, luck?" I asked somewhat resentfully.

"I'm up against it," he said. "My boss' car is gone, but your roadster's up there on the third floor. I've been up and seen it."

I didn't believe him, but he was allowed to take me up to that suspended floor over some improvised shaky stairs, and there stood my roadster on a wash-stand, smoke-blackened but intact, though the tires had sunk a little into the flame-heated concrete. Fact, so help me. I needed a drink, of Pop. I didn't get it, for it was Sunday and no liquid refreshment spots I knew about were open.

Later that day a construction and wrecking company rigged up the charred elevator, arranging to raise and lower it with block and tackle. I was on the third floor to see that my car was the first to go down, but they put a Franklin air-cooled on with it. At the risk of my life, I went on to the shaky contraption and told them to take off either the Franklin or my car. They took mine off and the Franklin went down slowly and safely. Then, as they were putting my car on, I hustled down, found my wife and hurried her round to the back where we could see our miraculously spared auto come down.

It started all right. But it stopped after it had been lowered a few feet. A man swung out, clinking to the heavy cross-beam, to free some hitch in the cable. He freed it. He freed it, then that shakey elevator dropped like a shot! Striking among smoke-blackened timbers floating in the water at the bottom of the shaft, the thing flung about a gallon of filthy liquid all over my wife's new dress. And my little car spread out, doing a very handsome split.

I went whooping after the garage man, and found him. "My car's going to be shipped back to the factory," I told him.

"That's not my business," he told me. "It's up to the head of the wrecking concern."

"Wrecking concern is right," said I. "Where is he?"

We found him trying to hide. He said he'd send my car to a repair shop. I said I'd be damned if he would.

I said he'd send it to the factory where it was built. He grimly refused. The garage proprietor could not make him budge, either. He ducked, vanished and couldn't be found again.

The garage man said, "All right, sir. Patten, I'll send your car to the factory myself and he will pay the bill, for I'll take it out of what he's paid for this job."

"Thank you, sir," said I, "and please add the cost of my wife's new dress, which is ruined."

"I will," said he.

I'd regretfully phoned Mrs. Lillie that I couldn't take her out sightseeing, having lost my means of transportation. We returned to Camden on Tuesday, coming back to Boston three weeks later to get the factory-restored car. But that car never again was quite what it had been, and the tires were ruined by the heat of the concrete wash-stand on which it had stood.

Many years later I saw Pawnee Bill at Coney Island, where he was showing. It saddened me. His wife was dead and he gave a very poor performance with a vastly depleted company. When he grasped my hand and smiled, I saw the shadow of a great grief in his eyes. Something more than the passing years had turned his hair very grey. No longer did he gallop astride a beautiful horse to break glass balls thrown into the air. Even with shot-loaded cartridges he stood on the ground to do that!

The loss of lovely Mae Lillie had almost broken him utterly. Being a sentimental cuss, it was hard for me to hide my feelings. Something told me we'd never meet again.

Through a newspaper item, I learned still years later that he had been in New York, where I was at the time, but I did not learn it until the day of his leaving. And later, almost recently, I read of his death in Pawnee.

Wild Westerners, dime-novel heroes, ruffians? Some were and some still are, without doubt, but Pawnee Bill was a fine man, a gentleman to the tips of his fingers.

God rest his soul!

NEWSY NEWS

by Ralph F. Cummings

Continued from last month, Dare Devil Dave Adams says: When we

were boys instead of Superman, we had Frank Reade, instead of those horror, mystery "hair raisers," of the radio, we had our forbidden Jesse James. I confess that I eagerly, although secretly, read and followed the daring exploits of that band of outlaws, led by the "Misguided Missouri Mastermind," Jesse James, who was bad enough, but according to those who knew him, not nearly as bad as many of the dime novel writers picture him. But his courage was not exaggerated.

Like other boys in my home town long ago, who were original members of the "Monarch Club," devoted to innocent devilment and dime novel reading, which consisted really of all the 5c weeklies. I didn't neglect Diamond Dick Jr., Nick Carter, or old King Brady, but I know my admiration for Frank Merriwell had the most influence in shaping my future. I wanted to be a "strike-'em-out," instead of a "stick-'em-up," guy. But after a little amateur baseball, I decided upon doing my playing from a grand stand seat, so became a "bawl-'em-out" fan. I clearly remember the place where I bought my first Tip Top weekly #53, "Frank Merriwell, Bicycle Boys," and a great many afterwards back in old Indiana, the land of my childhood, in April 1897.

Dave sent in clippings of the death of Max Brand, a writer of Western Books, who was killed in action, on the Italy front, May 16th, 1944, Frederick Faust 52, known to millions of Western Story readers as Max Brand. Faust was the 17th American correspondent killed covering the war since it began in 1939. He wrote 85 books and quantities of fiction. Some papers have it as 58 books, which is right? George Ade also died May 17th 1944, age 78, an Indiana author, humorist, playwright, etc. He wrote "Bang! Bang!" in 1928, a comic take off, on the old novels. A collector of stories intended to recall memories of the nickel library days, when boys were supermen, a murder a fine art. John T. McCutcheon was the illustrator of this book. (He too, I hear, is dead.)

Dare Devil David says the last time he saw George Ade, he was much younger, does this mean you met him personally pard.

Here are some magazines and newspapers that had articles on novels, etc.

in them, such as:

New England Magazine for Sept. 1912, Vol. 48, No. 1. "The Modern Dime Novel." No author. Pic Magazine for Oct. 13th, 1942 "Jules Verne Foresaw Hitler's Rise and Fall," by Eugene Tillinger. New York Times Book Review, July 2, 1944, "Horatio Alger Jr. and Ragged Dick," has 3 illustrations of his books and pictures of himself by Stewart Holbrook. Los Angeles Times, July 2nd, 1944, "Man Holds Dime Novel Treasure in Americana," by John Selby. The illustration shows our bro. member Charles Bragin and part of his 20,000 collection of old novels and story papers.

Right address:— C. V. Clark, 1674 Broadway, New York 19, N. Y., as there was a mistake in the address in his ad in last months Roundup.

Modern Foot Specialist Book \$1.00. Agents wanted. Kiewit, 1115 Queen City, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Old Penmanship Magazines wanted. Richard Huenger, Box 141, Islip Terrace, Long Island, N. Y.

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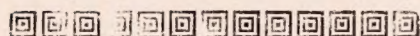
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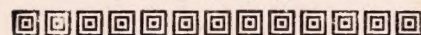
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ATTENTION COLLECTORS OF AMERICANA!

Here is a treasure!

Beadle's Dime Biographical Library, No. 3:— KIT CARSON, THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN SCOUT AND GUIDE. Very RARE! Published in 1861, while he was yet living. Condition good, except front cover a little worn at right edge and front cover not as new looking as back cover. Price \$10.

HERE IS A RARE ONE!

"Young Sleuth's Victory; or, A Detective's Adventure." By Archie Kutch. Ogilvie, Chicago, 1885. No, it's NCT "Young Sleuth." It's "Young Sleuthe" Two "e's. One of a series of genuine old blood and thunder stories about Young Sleuthe. The only specimen that I know of in existence. Paper bound book, 125 pages, good condition. No illustration on front cover, but one inside. Price \$3.

SPECIAL EXTRA! MALAESKA!

Beadle's Dime Novels, as follows:— NUMBER ONE. No. 1. Malaeska: The Indian Wife of the White Hunter. By Mrs. Ann S. Stephens. Irwin P. Beadle and Co. 1860. With special introductory notice by the publisher, dated June, 1860.

No. 2. The Privateer's Cruise, and the Bride of Pomfret Hail. By Harry Cavenish.

No. 3. Myra: The Child of Adoption. A Romance of Real Life. By Mrs. Ann S. Stephens.

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